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ABSTRACT

Most adults end up in their work roles through less than fully informed and too-often unintentional career decision-making. The economic and social consequences for individuals, their communities and the national economy are profound. By using what is known about career development and learning, career development professionals can dramatically improve the career planning and management process, lifelong for the individuals they serve. When the outcomes of quality career management interventions are expressed in terms of measurable impacts on personal, community, economic, and workforce development, the author asserts that career practitioners can capture the attention of legislators, policymakers and administrators, can gain more support for career management programs and services that can provide evidence of their success in these terms. (GCP)

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Phil Jarvis, Jessi Zielke & Charlsey Cartright

Abstact

Most adults end up in their work roles through less than fully informed and too-often unintentional career decision-making. The economic and social consequences for individuals, their communities and the national economy are profound. By using what we know about career development and learning we can dramatically improve the career planning and management process, lifelong, for the individuals we serve? When the outcomes of quality career management interventions are expressed in terms of measurable impacts on personal, community, economic and workforce development we can capture the attention of legislators, policy-makers and administrators, and gain more support for career management programs and services that can provide evidence of their success in these terms.

From Career Decision-Making to Career Management: It's All About Lifelong Learning

The world of work has changed significantly. Career practitioners know that. However, does the population at large really understand the impact of those changes on their life and work journey? Most adults make career decisions based on the models they learned in the past and are not prepared for the myriad of changes they will experience in their future. Just prior to graduation many youth are not clear what they want to do when they enter the workforce and have second thoughts regarding the plans they have made for entering new learning situations. In fact, of those youth who go directly to college or university programs, not to mention apprenticeship or trades training, nearly half change programs or drop out by the end of their first year. Of those who graduate, 50 percent may not be in jobs directly related to their programs of study two years after they graduate.[1] Moreover, many will be carrying heavy student loans burdens for years to come.

Clearly, change is the theme of work, learning and life of the 21st century. Career practitioners have the unique challenge to not only impact immediate career decisions, but to leave a lasting legacy by teaching clients and students the skills and competencies to effectively manage a career for a lifetime. The traditional vocational guidance paradigm is based on expecting youth, with help from their career counselor, to make an informed, long-term career choice before graduating from high school. Yet, when groups of adults are asked if they are now doing what they expected to be doing when they graduated, less than 10 percent (elementary educators and nurses excepted) raise their hands. The evidence suggests only a small minority of people is able to identify a "calling" at a young age, despite the pressures to which we continue to subject youth, and their counsellors, to do so.

The vocational guidance model is primarily about helping people make an informed occupational choice, and went as follows:

1. Explore one's interests, aptitudes, values, etc. (often with tests and professional help)
2. Explore the world of work (occupations)
3. Determine a "best fit" occupation by matching personal traits to occupational factors
4. Develop a plan to obtain the prerequisite education and training
5. Graduate, obtain secure employment, work hard, climb the ladder
6. Retire as young as possible on full pension to enjoy the rewards of years of hard work

Steps 1 through 4 still apply to the new career management paradigm, although the terms "work role," "cluster" or "industry sector" may be substituted for occupation. Contemporary workplace realities, however, now make these steps recurrent, and dramatically increase the need for ready access to career and labor market information and support services. Step 5 is no longer assured, and step 6 will only occur for those who learn career management skills, including financial planning, responsibility and self-discipline. Moreover, more and more people who enjoy their work don't want to stop at a fixed date.

The career management paradigm is not so much about making the right occupational choice as it is about equipping people with the skills to make the myriad choices necessary throughout their lives to become healthy, self-reliant citizens, able to cope with constant change in rapidly changing labor markets and connect with work they enjoy, and maintain balance between life and work roles. The cornerstones of the career management paradigm are the "high five" principles:

- Know yourself, believe in yourself and follow your heart.
- Focus on the journey, not the destination. Become a good traveler.

- You're not alone. Access your allies, and be a good ally.
- Change is constant, and brings with it new opportunities.
- Learning is life-long. We are inquisitive by nature, and most alive when we're learning.

In the career management paradigm, the question, "What do you want to be when ... ?" is replaced by questions like:

- "Who are you now, and what do you love to do?"
- "What are your special talents and skills?"
- "What types of situations, environments and work roles have special appeal for you?"
- "What types of organizations need what you can offer?"
- "What innovative work arrangements will suit you and potential employers?"
- "What do you want to do first when you graduate to move toward your preferred future?"

"People don't succeed by migrating to a 'hot' industry. They thrive by focusing on who they really are – and connecting to or creating work that they truly love (and, by doing so, unleashing a productive and creative power that they never imagined). Companies win when they engage the hearts and minds of individuals who are dedicated to answering their life question."[2] People who love what they do are more productive. In the words of Yahoo chief solutions officer Tim Sanders, "Over and over again, I've discovered that the businesspeople who are the busiest, the happiest, and the most prosperous are the ones who are the most generous with their knowledge and their expertise. People who love what they're doing, who love to learn new things, to meet new people, and to share what and whom they know with others: these are the people who wind up creating the most economic value and, as a result, moving their companies forward."[3]

Tests and computer systems seldom answer people's life questions and career professionals are not exclusively qualified to ask them. The career management paradigm puts control, and responsibility, in the hands of the individual, not in tests, computer systems or specialists. To be fully in control of their own lives, people need to learn career management skills just as they learn math, science, language or technical skills. Career development is now an on-going, learning and skill development process for all rather than an occasional counselling process for the few "who need help." All staff can contribute to the career management learning process, as can parents, spouses and any one else who knows and cares about the individual. As resident career experts, career practitioners who understand the new paradigm become pivotal players in the paradigm shift in their organizations, playing vital coaching, mentoring and coordinating roles for the learners and for those assisting in the learning process, rather than increasingly being relegated to the periphery in declining numbers.

Career is increasingly being viewed as something every human has for a lifetime.[4] Outdated definitions of "job" and "occupation" remain cornerstones of too many guidance processes and post-secondary education and training offerings. "Work is now defined not by occupational titles or categories, but by skills and values. Effective career managers know how to shape and build their careers, project by project. This is a new competency, still largely unrecognized by most adults in the workforce."[5]

"Increasingly, career development is about leadership. It's about the personal leadership required to take action, take risks and learn new skills. It's also about the leadership required to help others develop, grow and learn. Creating things that don't yet exist is now part of career development, not just choosing among existing options. Preparedness for an environment that does not yet exist is key to adaptability, and leadership – therefore, it's key to career management."[6]

Youth and adults need to master career management skills. To help them, career practitioners, counselors, educators and human resources specialists need programs and resources based on clear career management learning and performance outcomes. They need a means by which to easily select resources based on the outcomes they want to achieve with their clients and the skills they wish to build. They need a comprehensive accountability framework to ensure what they do actually helps their clients learn career management competencies in ways that are measurable. A common language and map or framework of career management competencies is needed so there is no ambiguity or confusion among career practitioners, employment counselors, educators and human resources specialists and the public about the goals and outcomes of career management interventions.

Costs of Unintentional Career Decision Making

The old paradigm, in which decision-making is viewed as point-in-time and is, in fact, largely unintentional, has not worked for many citizens. Too many people spend 50 percent of their conscious lives in work settings they do not like. Some take out the stresses of the work day on family members, seek relief in alcohol or substance abuse, and have little energy left for anything other than passive, inert escapes like watching television. The loss of productivity and the waste of human capital are palpable, whether measured in training costs or unrealized human potential.

Americans are proud of the social systems and infrastructure in place to ensure as many citizens as possible, young and old, enjoy one of the highest living standards in the world. America invests heavily to support individuals, groups and regions in need. Most of the expenditure items discussed below are essential infrastructure costs, well invested. The

numbers are so large, however, that minuscule elements of "slippage" equate to sums large enough to make a real difference to governments, corporations and communities. Fallout from gaps between people's skills and workforce needs reduces the return on investment we rightly expect from education, health care and social services investments. It also represents lost revenues to governments and lost competitiveness to businesses.

Lost Productivity and Reduced International Competitiveness.
For businesses and for our economy, productivity is the key to competitiveness. The productivity of America's workforce directly effects competitiveness in the global marketplace. If productivity increases, the entire economy and social structure benefit. If productivity slips, all Americans lose, and pay.

Getting the right person in the right job can make a huge difference to employers. After conducting a meta-analysis of 85 years of research on personnel selection, Schmidt and Hunter (in press) conclude that person-job congruence benefits the worker, the company, and the nation.[7] In Po Bronson's words, "We are sitting on a huge potential boom in productivity – if we could just get the square pegs out of the round holes."[8]

Annualized Gross Domestic Product for the United States in 2002/03 as at March 27, 2003 was $10,588.8 billion.[9] A 1 percent increase in productivity would result in an increase of over ***$100 billion*** in goods and services in the past year. Better mechanisms for helping people connect with work roles they like and in which they excel can have profound ramifications for U.S. society.

Education Funding. $700 billion[10] was invested in 2001/02 on primary, secondary and post-secondary education. American education systems are among the best in the world. Nonetheless, too many students are floundering or unsure why they are learning what they are learning. Many more cannot decide what programs they should be in. Many change programs, underachieve or drop out. Some extend their education because they are reluctant to move on. Most students do not fully understand the diversity of work roles that match their academic and technical skills. Only a few students are acquiring and mastering the skills of personal management, work and learning exploration, and career management they will need to complement their academic and technical skills in becoming self-reliant career managers beyond graduation. Effective career management programs would help youth develop these skills and gain greater focus and direction. Even a 1% increase in efficiencies through having more students learning what they are motivated to learn equates to ***$7 billion annually*** better invested.

Health Care Funding. Those who are unemployed or in work roles they dislike are subject to increased stress, have increased likelihood of unhealthy lifestyles, and are more prone to substance and physical abuse. Good jobs foster mental health whereas poor jobs cause distress (Loscocco & Roschelle, 1991)[11]. For instance, in a September 2002 Ipsos-Reid survey for the *Globe and Mail* and CTV[12], one in six adults surveyed (17%) said there has been a time in their life when they've been under so much stress that they've thought about committing suicide. The main causes of stress cited by survey respondents were associated with work (43%) and finances (39%).

$460 billion[13] was invested by the U.S. Office of Health and Human Services in fiscal year 2002 on health care services for Americans. If only 1% of the people now availing themselves of healthcare sevices require these services as a result of their inability to find and keep meaningful employment, then $4.6 billion annually could be saved by them finding satisfying work. If the actual percentage is higher, say a modest 5%, this equates to *$22.5 billion annually.* Some or all of this could be invested in improved health care services for all citizens.

Protection, Prisons and Corrections. Over $150 billion[14] was invested by all levels of government in the past year on criminal justice. One might expect that a contributing factor in the case of some law-breakers and detainees is their inability to connect with appropriate life and work roles. A 1% improvement in helping more of these youth and adults acquire career management skills, become hopeful about their future and achieve increased self-reliance, could generate savings of *$1.5 billion annually.*

Lost Government Revenues. Over $2,000,000 million[15] was collected in receipts in 2003 by the U.S. Government in income taxes (individual and corporate), property taxes, consumption taxes, health premiums, social insurance contributions, etc. If more Americans were able to connect with steady work they like, the government could anticipate increased receipts. A 1% improvement here would generate over *$20,000 million annually* in increased government receipts. A 5% improvement would yield a *$100,000 million annual* windfall for the U.S. government.

The ability of more citizens to make effective connections to meaningful work is the underpinning of improvement in each of these areas. Excellent career, learning and labour market information and mastery of career management skills can help them make these connections. If even a small percentage of U.S. citizens increase their mastery of career management skills, the economic gains, not to mention the human and personal gains, will be enormous. Consider the impact on the U.S. economy and society

of freeing up the figures discussed above, no matter how they may be redirected!

Addressing the Career Management Paradigm Shift

The National Occupational Information Coordinating Committee initiated pioneering work on a national career management skills framework in 1988. The result was the *National Career Development Guidelines* that were adopted by many U.S. states through their State Occupational Information Coordinating Committees. With permission from NOICC, Canada began adaptation of the *Guidelines* in 1998. The result is Canada's *Blueprint for Life/Work Designs* (www.blueprint4life.ca). Thousands of American and Canadian career practitioners, employment counselors, educators, human resources specialists and researchers have now spent fourteen years developing, piloting, evaluating, revising and implementing this career management competency framework.

Both the *Guidelines* and *Blueprint* identify core career management *competencies* with associated *performance indicators* for each competency at four developmental levels across the lifespan. The core competencies are the basis upon which career development programs can be designed. The performance indicators, which are organized by *learning stages*, can be used to measure learning gains and demonstrate the effectiveness of such programs.

Competencies and performance indicators are arranged under three key headings (from *Blueprint*):

Area A: Personal Management
1. Build and maintain a positive self-image
2. Interact positively and effectively with others
3. Change and grow throughout one's life

Area B: Learning and Work Exploration
4. Participate in life-long learning supportive of life/work goals
5. Locate and effectively use life/work information
6. Understand the relationship between work and society/economy

Area C: Life/Work Building
7. Secure or create and maintain work
8. Make life/work enhancing decisions
9. Maintain balanced life and work roles
10. Understand the changing nature of life and work roles
11. Understand, engage in and manage one's own life/work building process

These competencies include the employability, essential and emotional skills employer groups suggest are lacking in too many prospective employees, particularly youth. In fact, work habits and attitudes strongly influence early adult earnings, so educational and training programs need to emphasize work behaviors as much as they emphasize job skills.[16] Self-reliance grows out of the acquisition of these skills.

The *Guidelines* and *Blueprint* recognize that people at different ages and stages learn differently, and that even young children can learn and appreciate these competencies. In fact, we know that attitudes toward work are formed early in life, so workforce and vocational guidance policy should take a developmental perspective. Vocational psychologists such as Super, Crites, Gribbons, and Lohnes have each concluded from their longitudinal studies that planful competence in early adolescence relates to more realistic educational and vocational choices, occupational success, and career progress.[17] For this reason, the core competencies in both the *Guidelines* and *Blueprint* are defined for four developmental levels:

Level 1:	Primary/Elementary School
Level 2:	Junior High/Middle School
Level 3:	High School
Level 4:	Adult, including Post-secondary

There are *performance indicators* for each competency, at each level, organized by "learning stages." To view the entire Blueprint framework, for example, visit http://blueprint4life.ca/competencies.cfm and click on any intersection on the matrix.

Current Uses and Applications

The *Guidelines* and *Blueprint* provide the basis for setting the learning outcomes, establishing performance standards, and measuring success in any public or private sector agency in the career development business. Orientation and train-the-trainer sessions are available to educators, career and employment counselors and human resources specialists to make effective use of the *Guidelines* and *Blueprint* and its diverse supporting materials. More and more departments of education, labor and workforce development, community services and others are integrating the *Guidelines* and *Blueprint* in their career management programs or imbedding their competencies into their own guidelines. Career resources, programs, curricula and services from public and private sector organizations, large and small, are being coded to the *Guidelines* and *Blueprint* competencies and performance indicators.

The networks represented in *America's Career Resource Network*

Association created the *Guidelines* and develop and distribute to citizens in every state and territory the highest quality career, learning and labor market information delivery systems and resources. Many also promote learning resources to help their citizens acquire career management skills. For example, one ACRNA resource, *The Real Game Series* (www.realgame.org), is now used by a *million* students each year in 30,000 U.S. classrooms to help students learn the *Guidelines/Blueprint* career management competencies. To contact the CRN in your state visit: www.acrna.net.

The Blueprint as an Agent of Change

In Canada, the Blueprint provides the following innovative tools to assist in redesigning or enhancing existing career development initiatives. All can be accessed at www.blueprint4life.ca/components.cfm. Training is also available to help individuals and organizations increase their capacity to effectively use the Blueprint to full benefit in their unique situation.

- Quick Reference Guide PDF
- Full Edition PDF MS Word
- Implementation Guide MS Word
- Planning Process MS Word
- Brochure PDF
- Wall Chart PDF
- Resource Coding Guide MS Word
- PowerPoint - Overview PPT
- Powerpoint - Economic Consequences PPT
- Partnership Framework PDF
- Career Management Paradigm Shift MS WORD
- Career Practitioners Guidelines & Standards
- Leadership sessions

Conclusion

- An outdated, industrial-age vocational guidance mindset remains prevalent in the minds of administrators, policy-makers and most citizens, and the costs to individuals and society in the knowledge age are staggering;
- A new paradigm is now emerging that centers on learning, lifelong, a set of essential career and life management skills delineated in the National Career Development Guidelines (U.S.) and the Blueprint for Life/Work Designs (Canada); and
- New tools and materials, and new procedures to begin, step-by-step, to implement elements of the new career management paradigm in useers day-to-day work settings and personal lives have been described and are now available..

Footnotes

[1] Statistics Canada and Human Resources Development Canada (1997). *School Leavers Survey* .

[2] Bronson, P. (2003). *What should I do with my life? The true story of people who answered the ultimate question.* Random House.

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[6] Redekopp, D., (2002). Life Role Development Group, Edmonton.

[7] Savickas, M, (2002). *14 Facts career specialists could assert in debates about public policy regarding workforce development and career guidance.* For International Career Development Policy/Practice Symposium participants, Vancouver.

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[9] US Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Anaylsis (www.bea.gov/bea/rels.htm), Washington, D.C., March 2003

[10] U.S. Department of Education, *Digest of Education Statistics: 2001*, Chapter 1, (2002). (http://www.policyalmanac.org/education/archive/doe_state_of_education.shtml)

[11] Savickas, M, (2002). *14 facts career specialists could assert in debates about public policy regarding workforce development and career guidance.* For International Career Development Policy/Practice Symposium participants, Vancouver.

[12] *Canadians and stress: A special report.* Ipsos-Reid, (2002).

[13] United States Department of Health and Human Services website (http://www.hhs.gov/news/press/2002pres/profile.html (2002), April 2003

[14] U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics website (2000) (http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/), Washington, D.C.

[15] The White House, Office of Management and Budget website, (2003) Estimate (http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/budget/fy2003/sheetshist01z1.xls)

[16] Savickas, M, (2000). *14 Facts career specialists could assert in debates about public policy regarding workforce development and career guidance.* For International Career Development Policy/Practice Symposium participants, Vancouver.

[17] Ibid.

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